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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001360

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE, D. TEITELBAUM  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2009

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: UN VISITOR TESTS WATERS

REF: (A) HARARE 1335 (B) HARARE 1313 (C) HARARE 1250

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5 b/d

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting at the Embassy August 6, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tuliameni Kalomoh solicited the Ambassador's assessment of the Zimbabwean political and humanitarian situations. He advised that his five-day visit to Zimbabwe was "private" but that he had met with leaders from the ruling and opposition parties and would report back to Secretary-General Annan, who was following Zimbabwe closely. Kalomoh commented on the ruling party leadership's hostility to the United States, and inquired what steps might be taken by either side to lower temperatures. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) The Assistant Secretary-General, a Namibian national, was in Zimbabwe August 2-7. He did not request a meeting with the Ambassador (he said he thought the Ambassador had left post), and the Embassy only became aware of his visit through other diplomats. We understand that he met separately with Swedish and Norwegian ambassadors, ruling party officials (NFI), selected representatives of civil society, and MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai. His visit was ignored by the state media but noted in the independent Financial Gazette (owned by Reserve Bank Governor Gono) in a front page article, "UN Spying on Zim." Kalomoh reportedly was hosted by the Center for Peace Initiatives in Africa, whose director, Leonard Kapungu, is a retired UN official and Zimbabwean national. During the meeting with the Ambassador, Kalomoh was accompanied by Kapungu but no UN officials.

UN Posture  
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3. (C) Kalomoh said that Secretary-General Annan was concerned that, while Zimbabwe was not in conflict, its political crisis lacked resolution. The Secretary-General's hope was for the creation of an environment for free and fair elections in 2005 that would effectively put the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections behind the country. The UN was interested in fostering dialogue between the two parties and civil society, and was encouraged by proposed electoral reforms and prospects for the establishment of a truly independent election commission with real authority. The UN was not in a position to observe Zimbabwean elections but could help to coordinate observers and offer technical assistance. The GOZ, however, still maintained that it had sufficient resources to conduct its election without assistance. Kalomoh noted that ruling party elements differed in their views of the UN; some regarded it as a lackey of the British and Americans but others appeared willing to engage meaningfully.

Polarization and Elections  
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4. (C) Kalomoh remarked on the leading parties' starkly different perceptions regarding upcoming elections. To the ruling party, the election climate was fine; it looked forward to elections in March or at the latest June following the implementation of proposed election reforms. The opposition had nothing good to say about the election climate; its principal objections to election reforms were that they didn't go far enough and the opposition had not been sufficiently consulted.

5. (C) Kalomoh asserted that the parties were not separated as much by substantive policy differences as by "too much war of words" over the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections. He noted deep ruling party antipathy toward MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai in contrast to its more positive view of MDC Secretary-General Welshman Ncube; he inquired about the relationship between the two. He said he had discussed concerns over the treason trial with the parties and with civil society; many thought Tsvangirai would be convicted but ruling party interlocutors gave the impression that he would not be executed. He recognized that the upcoming parliamentary elections and the ZANU-PF succession issue complicated political posturing within each party and between them. Kalamoh asserted that the fact that each side

seemed to believe that it would win a free and fair election offered some hope that they could come together on the terms of a free and fair election. He reported that the GOZ planned to conduct a by-election in September for the Seke seat vacated by MDC MP Ben Tumbare-Mutasa's death last month.

(Comment: Electoral Supervisory Commission officials told poloff they were unaware of plans to conduct the by-election, which we understand would not be required legally given the imminence of scheduled parliamentary elections. End comment.)

Mugabe, Africa, and the United States  
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16. (C) According to Kalomoh, the ruling party did not speak with one voice but was unanimous on its view of the United States, the UK, and the EU as being out to dictate Zimbabwean policy and to impinge on Zimbabwean sovereignty. Ruling party officials had been adamant that the parliamentary elections would involve observers from SADC and African countries but none from the United States, Canada or EU member states.

17. (C) Kalamoh noted Mugabe's skill at managing confrontation -- "he's not so good when it's not there." In this instance, Mugabe had played on African resentment of the West and a genuine perception among Africans that the West could not tolerate the GOZ's redistribution of land from whites to blacks. Kalamoh said Africans generally regarded Zimbabwean elections as no worse than many other African elections; the contrast between the West's rejection of Zimbabwe's elections and its relative acceptance of others fueled conspiracy theories. In that vein, he expressed personal bitterness over the West's reliance on Commonwealth assessments of Zimbabwean elections in 2002 in complete disregard of SADC observation reports with which he had been involved. In any event, Africans perceived that the United States had been enlisted by the UK to support its effort reverse land reform and believed that the two western powers should "make the first move".

18. (C) Kalomoh asked about interactions between the USG and State House, and whether the Ambassador would be paying a farewell courtesy call on the President. He inquired about USG views of proposed electoral reforms and whether some positive note could be taken of the reform efforts. If not now, how far would the GOZ have to go? Under what circumstances could any of the targeted sanctions be removed?

Doubts on Food  
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19. (C) Noting that he also had talked to offices involved in the food situation here, Kalomoh expressed concern about GOZ crop forecasts. He said that UN agencies and others had concluded that GOZ forecasts were significantly underestimated.

GOZ and USG Distance  
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10. (C) The Ambassador advised Kalomoh that he had submitted a pro forma request for customary departure courtesies, including a call on the President, but had yet to receive a response. (Comment: The British Embassy received no response to a similar submission prior to the recent departure of its Ambassador; in blaring front page headlines, the state media then blasted his "slinking out" without observing diplomatic etiquette. End comment.) He recounted his meeting periodically with the MFA PermSec and selected members of the Cabinet, but indicated that the GOZ and ruling party had shown little interest in engaging. The USG had issued balanced statements on elections and repeatedly voiced support for lawful and non-violent land reform, but any positive or encouraging tenor in USG pronouncements had been ignored. On the contrary, the state media appeared to seize and to exaggerate every possible issue to drive a deeper wedge in bilateral relations.

11. (C) The Ambassador stressed the great importance attached by the USG to progress on the rule of law, cessation of political violence, and the conduct of free and fair election as a means to move the country in the right direction. He emphasized the potential significance of the treason trial outcome: a guilty verdict based on the flimsy evidence presented would erase the last vestige of judicial integrity in the country and cast a pall over prospects for meaningful political reconciliation. The Ambassador also noted bipartisan Congressional support for the USG position on Zimbabwe. Americans of all political stripes were concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe not because "white land" had been taken, but because of the violence, abuse of human rights and attacks on the independence of the media and judiciary that had occurred. In conclusion, the Ambassador expressed concern that the proposed NGO bill (ref C) would further shrink democratic space in the country and outweigh any putative benefits of election reform.

Comment

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12. (C) The ruling party generally has been suspicious of the UN, as evidenced by its disinvitation of a UN election assessment team in mid-visit last March and official media castigation of selected UN employees for disseminating "bad information" on Zimbabwe. The state media's non-coverage of Kalomoh's visit was uncharacteristic in that regard, and may reflect divisions or uncertainty in the leadership about the means and ends of marketing electoral reforms internationally. Some of Kalomoh's inquiries implied interest in tying benchmarks of political progress to international re-engagement, echoing an effort by the bishops troika to elicit benchmarks from us to entice the ruling party into inter-party dialogue last year. We were impressed with Kalomoh's familiarity with the issues and believe that UN interest can be constructive, especially to the extent it connects election fairness to legitimacy in the eyes of domestic and regional players.

SULLIVAN